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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, June 5, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "DOES HOME CANNING PAY?" Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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Any woman with the job of running a home economically has to decide one question very often. That question is: What shall I make, and what shall I buy? It's the choice between homemade and factory-made.

In making the decision you have to consider whether the time and effort you would spend in making will pay. And you want to be sure what you make will be either cheaper or better than what you can buy.

Right now canning season is underway. So now you may be trying to decide whether it pays to put up vegetables at home, or whether you can buy canned vegetables that are just as cheap and just as good.

To find the answer to this question Emma Holmes of the Vermont Experiment Station last year made an investigation of 4 canned vegetables--tomatoes, snap beans, peas and greens. She studied these vegetables as put up in rural homes in Vermont. And then she studied the canned vegetables for sale in Vermont grocery stores. She compared the home-canned and commercially canned vegetables in price and also quality.

First, Miss Holmes visited housewives in 3 counties in Vermont to get information on home canning. Sixty-one of these women gave her their complete canning records, and also samples of their home-canned tomatoes, snap beans, peas and greens.

Miss Holmes found that many of these women didn't bother about canning by scientific methods, so they often had a good deal of spoilage in their canned food.



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Fifteen of them said they didn't use any printed directions for canning--just canned from memory or guess. Others used the canning directions they found in cookbooks, or in the leaflets that came with jars or rubbers. A few followed the directions in State or Federal leaflets.

As you might guess from this, they did their canning in a great variety of ways. Some packed vegetables in the jars cold, some packed hot. Some processed in steamers, some in the water bath, and some in the oven. A comparatively few used pressure canners for canning vegetables. Most of them apparently did not know that the most dangerous spoilage can come from canning non-acid vegetables like peas, beans and greens without a pressure canner.

The spoilage records kept by these women showed that many more home-canned peas spoiled than greens, tomatoes and beans. At least twice as many greens spoiled as tomatoes and snap beans. Miss Holmes found that spoilage was mostly the result of wrong canning methods, or using imperfect jars or rubbers, or a pressure canner with a gauge out of order.

Now about the time these women spent in home canning. Peas took longest with greens coming next. Vermont women averaged about 31 minutes for a quart of peas, and about 22 minutes for a quart of greens. A quart of snap beans took about 19 minutes, and tomatoes only about 11 minutes.

Now about the cost of home-canning. Of course, if you use vegetables from your own garden you'll save more on canning than if you buy vegetables to can. But Miss Holmes found a number of women buying vegetables for canning, so she counted the cost of the vegetables in her estimate of expenses. Other money expenses she counted were: extra ingredients like salt, vinegar, sugar; equipment such as jars, rubbers, covers, canner; the heat or fuel for canning; and last but not least an allowance for spoilage.

Miss Holmes found that all the women did their canning in glass jars, and



she estimated from their records that jars lasted 10 years or more. Most of the processing equipment if properly cared for lasted at least 15 years. The women used mostly wood stoves or kerosene stoves so the cost of fuel was low. But the cost of spoilage was considerable. Spoilage brought up the cost of canning peas at home as much as 3 cents on each quart.

Taking all these points into consideration Miss Holmes figured the cost of a quart of home-canned peas to average about 30 cents, and the cost of greens to be 20 cents a quart. The cost of a quart of home-canned snap beans she figured about 8 cents, and home-canned tomatoes about 5 cents.

Then she checked the prices of canned vegetables selling in the stores where these housewives traded. She concluded that canning tomatoes and beans at home was a paying proposition for these Vermont housewives, but that they actually lost money when they put up greens and peas. Counting the time they spent in canning, Miss Holmes figured they were making 50 cents an hour when they put up tomatoes, and 49 cents an hour when they put up snap beans. But they lost 15 cents an hour on peas, and 5 cents an hour on greens.

These figures apply only where housewives had to pay for vegetables. The figures show that if you must buy vegetables, your savings from home canning depend on choosing inexpensive, easily canned vegetables. Of course, if you have your own vegetables, you will save much more than as if you had to buy them. And then, how much you save on canning depends on how much you lose from spoilage because of careless canning.

But cost isn't everything. Quality counts, too. And many women say they put up their own canned food because home-canned food is better. Miss Holmes and her helpers checked on this question of quality. They tasted and scored all the samples of home-canned and commercially canned food for flavor and tenderness.





They found that on the whole commercially canned vegetables scored higher than home canned. Too many women put up vegetables when they are too ripe for best flavor, or when they aren't ripe enough.

So now if you're going to can at home, you want to be sure the vegetables you use are just ripe enough, and you want to prepare and can them by the methods that keep them safe and delicious.

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